

BOOK REVIEW

A Practical Guide to Integrating Technology into Task-Based Language Teaching

Marta González-Lloret

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Over and above the fact that the latest educational technologies *seem* more exciting and more interesting than their earlier counterparts, because the implementation, use, and assessment of the originals was not guided by educational principles in language development, they could only really be utilized for entertainment purposes.

Today, however, Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) and its theoretical principles in Task-based Language Learning (TBLL) now provide an excellent and far more interesting approach for educators and teachers of foreign languages wishing to introduce technology into the classroom. As a direct result of this, students' learning of a foreign language can now be fostered within both the formal and informal contexts of school and home, thereby allowing them to achieve high-quality language learning through authentic tasks and in a fun way.

Many researchers studying second language acquisition have coincided in pointing out that the huge number of didactic applications designed to be used as a principled framework in TBLT are useful for organizing the technological implementation of language learning. Moreover, the innovative combination of tasks and technology, led by the principles of TBLT and TBLL, bring affordances for language learning through students' connection with other speakers of the language that they are learning. In this way learners are encouraged to be creative, which in turn makes language learning personally more meaningful to them and, practicing in this way, helps to minimize students' fear of failure or embarrassment, as well as, broadly speaking, promoting

learning by doing. Thus, the student of a foreign language can become the main protagonist of their own language learning process.

The interest in the topic of this book is quite evident since the number of publications related to the marriage between TBLT and technology has grown rapidly in recent years, particularly, in the fields of second language studies, in the general fields of education and, moreover, in the field related to educational technology. In her own introduction to her book, the author, Marta González-Lloret, states that her aim in writing it has been to apprise and guide both teachers of foreign languages and educators who are interested in learning new techniques about how the theoretical principles of TBLT can be transferred to practical classroom tasks in order to improve technology-mediated materials for a TBLT syllabus.

Hence, this book is targeted, on the one hand, at both pre- and in-service teachers of foreign and second languages, who will find it useful in the day-to-day teaching of task-based, technology-mediated lessons. On the other hand, it is also oriented at professionals who develop both language curricula and materials, thereby giving them the opportunity to see for themselves how theoretical concepts can become authentic activities in the classroom by offering illustrations of materials which have been utilized effectively.

The author combines both the theoretical principles and practical illustrations of technology-mediated TBLT. The book comprises four chapters, each of which finishes with three different sections which are designed to afford the reader with an excellent opportunity to discuss the key aspects mentioned throughout the chapter with colleagues. The first of these sections is called “Reflective Questions” and is aimed at encouraging further personal research and debate on some of the topics raised. The next section invites the reader to carry out some tasks, which have been suggested as “Activities” for students in the chapter, so that they can put into practice and test the various concepts explained for themselves. Last, but by no means least, the reader is provided with a “Recommended Reading” section, so that the topic of the chapter can be further extended to the reader’s satisfaction.

Each of the four chapters follow the steps to be taken in the implementation of a TBLT syllabus, in accordance with the criteria established by Mike Long (1985, 2015) and John Norris (2009) for such a curriculum.

Chapter 1, entitled “*What is technology-mediated TBLT?*”, presents the reader with the book’s approach. González-Lloret conceives “technology-mediated TBLT” as a recent method of thinking, and analyses the effects of combining TBLT and technology. Here we are introduced to the key concepts of TBLT, and are offered various definitions of the term “task”, which lead us to reflect on the considerations we should take into account when contemplating the use of the Task-based Language-Teaching approach.

Chapter 2, the title of which is “*How to Conduct a Needs Analysis of Tasks and Technologies*”, is related to the first step in the implementation of a TBLT syllabus, which is to conduct a “needs analysis”. The importance of doing this for teachers contemplating the idea of working with TBLT underpins the creation of materials and is what tailors the tasks to their specific requirements. The author guides the reader through this process by offering illustrations of what to do and the various sources, resources and methods that can be employed. She examines: 1. What activities are needed, 2. What target language is required, and 3. What level of digital literacy is involved. An example of a Spanish program at an American university is given.

Chapter 3, called “*Creating, Organizing, and Sequencing Tasks*”, deals with the creation, organization, and sequencing of didactic activities. This chapter explains the basic principles of TBLT that are to be taken into account when creating activities. It sets out the steps for implementing combined didactic language and technological activities in tasks that address the linguistic targets identified in the needs analysis, and goes on to illustrate possible activities which can be used to suit the needs of different situations. In this way González-Lloret proposes different methods to sequence didactic activities in order to create a technology-mediated, task-based unit. These sequenced pedagogic tasks are based on the task complexity theory.

The two major works on task complexity, Peter Robinson’s *Cognition Hypothesis* (2001) and Peter Skehan’s *Limited Attentional Capacity Model* (1998), are briefly explained in this chapter. In addition, further academic reading available on this topic is suggested. Various illustrations of complete units are shown and explained, together

with proposals for possible changes in order to fit them to various language levels and technological contexts. Examples of units in Chinese (an intermediate blended TBLT course in Chinese), Spanish (a unit for learners of Spanish with the focus on poetry classes), ESL (a commercially available illustration of English language materials), and the hospitality industry (a catering and hospitality Web-based language kit) are also included.

Finally, Chapter 4, the title of which is “*Performance-Based Assessment and Curriculum Evaluation*”, is aimed at the last two steps: improving a TBLT syllabus after having implemented the materials, and learner evaluation and curriculum assessment. The author maintains that assessment/evaluation is of great relevance for the sustainability of any technology-mediated TBLT program, even though the assessment issue is one of the weakest areas in TBLT. This chapter pays special attention to how to connect and how to deal with performance-based evaluation in technology-mediated TBLT materials. González-Lloret continually highlights the key issues of performance-based evaluation throughout the chapter. She once again offers illustrations, as well as proposing different educational technologies that can make assessment of the learning process easier. In its conclusion, this chapter offers guidelines to help teachers of foreign languages assess the effectiveness of the materials that they have created, and provides illustrations of task-based unit evaluation.

This short, practical guide, first released as an ebook and currently in print, offers both *educators* and, more specifically, *teachers* of foreign languages a clear plan as to how to successfully integrate technology into TBLT in the classroom and to develop technologically-mediated materials. Whether the aim is to conduct a needs analysis, create homework or classroom materials, or design and implement a new approach to student evaluation, the book *A Practical Guide to Integrating Technology into Task-Based Language Teaching*, written by M. González-Lloret, will be a welcome resource for language teachers at any level.

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